

FATHERS DAY 2017

INTRODUCTION

Happy Father's day to all the dads here today. May the Lord richly bless you and enable you to be a good father who loves his wife and children and who serves his heavenly Father wholeheartedly.

When one thinks of a father heart, as a Christian, we must take Father God as our greatest example, and the most amazing and prolific characteristic of Father God that we experience, is His love for us!

1 John 4:8 says, "God is love". He showed us this love by sending His son for us: **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life".

Sadly. Too many people have a distorted and incorrect image of what a father must be like because of the behaviour of their own biological father. I have said this many times and I say it again, we cannot compare, or see Father God as we see our earthly fathers, as His glory, beauty, grace, righteousness, holiness and love far outshine anything that man is even remotely capable of.

However, every earthly father should desire and actively work toward reflecting the characteristics and attributes of his Heavenly Father. Dad's, we should have this statement from **Joshua 24:15** as our motto: "**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord**".

Did you know that the church itself had father-figures who pioneered and laid out the path of the church? To name some of them: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Papias of Hierapolis, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria. They were ancient and generally influential Christian theologians. They followed on from the work done by the twelve apostles.

Today I don't want to speak about them, I want to go earlier briefly speak about one of the Apostles, and his fatherly role. Dads, moms and even children can learn so much from his behaviour and teachings.

MESSAGE

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF A FATHER

Dr. Gail Gross wrote this article in the Huffington post about the influence of a father:

While almost any man can father a child, there is so much more to the important role of being dad in a child's life. Let's look at who father is, and why he is so important.

Fathers are central to the emotional well-being of their children; they are capable caretakers and disciplinarians.

Studies show that if your child's father is affectionate, supportive, and involved, he can contribute greatly to your child's cognitive, language, and social development, as well as academic achievement, a strong inner core resource, sense of well-being, good self-esteem, and authenticity.

How fathers influence our relationships.

Your child's primary relationship with his/her father can affect all of your child's relationships from birth to death, including those with friends, lovers, and spouses. Those early patterns of interaction with father are the very patterns that will be projected forward into all relationships...forever more: not only your child's intrinsic idea of who he/she is as he/she relates to others, but also, the range of what your child considers acceptable and loving.

Girls will look for men who hold the patterns of good old dad. Therefore, if father was kind, loving, and gentle, they will reach for those characteristics in men. Girls will look for, in others, what they have experienced and become familiar with in childhood. Because they've gotten used to those familial and historic behavioral patterns, they think that they can handle them in relationships.

Boys on the other hand, will model themselves after their fathers. They will look for their father's approval in everything they do, and copy those behaviors that they recognize as both successful and familiar. Thus, if dad was abusive, controlling, and dominating, those will be the patterns that their sons will imitate and emulate. However, if father is loving, kind, supportive, and protective, boys will want to be that.

Human beings are social animals and we learn by modeling behavior. In fact, all primates learn how to survive and function successfully in the world through social imitation. Those early patterns of interaction are all children know, and it is those patterns that effect how they feel about themselves, and how they develop. Your child is vulnerable to those early patterns and incorporates those behavioral qualities in his/her repertoire of social exchange.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of dad. For example, girls who have good relationships with their fathers tend to do better in math, and boys who have actively involved fathers tend to have better grades and perform better on achievement tests. And well-bonded boys develop securely with a stable and sustained sense of self. Who we are and who we are to be, we are becoming, and fathers are central to that outcome.

PAUL, THE APOSTLE – A FATHER FIGURE TO THE CHURCH

Without a doubt Paul was a "church father". He wrote least 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. He was a phenomenal father figure who, after his experience on the Damascus road, lived solely for Jesus Christ and his great mission in life was to spread the Gospel. We have so much to learn from him.

We don't know if he had biological children, but he certainly had spiritual children and he knew how to be responsible and accountable for that role:

1 Corinthians 4:15-16(NKJV) For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

1 Corinthians 4:17(NKJV) For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

- Here immediately we see the role of father – it's way more than just instruction – it's living a life of example.
- He sent Timothy to remind them of his ways.
- He said imitate me as I imitate Christ!
- He was not afraid to discipline:
 - **1 Corinthians 4:18 & 21**(NKJV) Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. 21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

Even though Paul wasn't their biological father, he took the role of father seriously. He didn't shirk his responsibility. He did what it took.

- ***Is that true about our lives today dads? Do we need to raise the bar of our fathering?***

WHAT DID PAUL SEE FATHERHOOD TO BE?

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (NKJV) You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

He saw it as living a life that was an example:

- He knew that not only his spiritual children were witnesses of his life, but God too!
- "You are witnesses of our behaviour – devout, blameless and just".
- "You know how we exhorted, comforted and charged (challenged) every one of you".

The Message Bible paraphrases the verse in a way that brings new clarity and understanding of the fatherly role:

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (MSG) You remember us in those days, friends, working our fingers to the bone, up half the night, moonlighting so you wouldn't have the burden of supporting us while we proclaimed God's Message to you. You saw with your own eyes how discreet and courteous we were among you, with keen sensitivity to you as fellow believers. And God knows we weren't freeloaders! You experienced it all firsthand. With each of you we were like a father with his child, holding your hand, whispering encouragement, showing you step-by-step how to live well before God, who called us into his own kingdom, into this delightful life.

Simple, isn't it. Dads, does our behaviour have these characteristics?

- Working our finger to the bone for our families?
 - Even being prepared to take on extra work to support our families.
 - Bearing the burden instead of laying it on his spiritual children.
 - Discreet, courteous, supportive, keenly sensitive!
 - Holding hands, whispering encouragement.
 - Showing them step-by-step how to live before God...and I would add, before people!
- ***I ask again dads, is that true about our lives today? Do we need to raise the bar of our fathering?***

A POEM ABOUT DAD'S

My Father Poem by Rachel Quillin

Every child likes to think
That their father is the best,
But there's no doubt for me, Dad,
That you're far above the rest.

When I was little
You took time to play with me.
You'd wrestle, read, or color,
Though so tired you would be.

You knew that play was not enough
To make the greatest dad.
You also shared God's love for me,
And for this I'm very glad.

Your godly life has made you
The best father there could be;
You've followed God's example
Of what a father should be.

I love you, Father, on this day

As well as on the rest.
No dad on earth compares to you.
You simply are the best.

CONCLUSION

Dads, dad's to be, husbands, husbands to be, God is our great example – He is love, His word teaches us exactly how to live as fathers and husbands and spiritual fathers.

- Do our lives measure up to the example in God's word?
- Are we patient, loving and caring?
- Do we set the example of how to live or do we say, "don't do what I do, do what I say"?

Children, sons, daughters what about you?

- Are you giving the love and respect that the bible teaches about? The first command with a promise is that we honour our parents if we want to live long in the land!
- Is there hurt and unforgiveness that needs to be dealt with.
- For those younger men and woman who busy jobs and family lives, when last did you make time to spend with your own ageing dad or mom that raised you with so much love and sacrifice?

My final two challenges this morning:

We have the greatest fatherly example of all, our heavenly Father. Let us follow His example and be the best dads we can be.

In Christ Jesus we have the greatest example of being a child – "Not my will Father, but yours be done". Let us be the best children we can be too.